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SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY: ONE EYE  
ON THE DONORS, THE OTHER ON THE 2012 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

11. SUMMARY. On July 23, Prime Minister Souleymane Ndene Ndiaye delivered a general policy speech to a packed National Assembly chamber that included diplomats from Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Europe, and the US. A shrewd mixture of candor and gesture characterized the speech, as he at least mentioned themes ranging from good governance to "the core priority of the government," generating youth employment. The speech was not only a rousing affirmation of the PM's faith in his country's future, but an attempt to recover in the eyes of the international community the country's reputation as a progressive African country, and a shrewd gambit for the GOS to rebound from its drubbing in the March 22 legislative elections in order to set the groundwork for winning the 2012 presidential elections. END SUMMARY.

CANDOR AND BOLD AMBITIONS  
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12. The mood at this "declaration of general policy" that Prime Minister Souleymane Ndene Ndiaye delivered to a packed National Assembly hall was somber but determined. Ndene Ndiaye became PM of a new government on June 5 after opposition candidates were voted into office in large numbers in the March 22 regional and local elections. His mandate is to recreate a voting power base in time for the 2012 presidential elections, and to do this, he brought out a long list of projects and goals to solve what he admitted were big national problems connected to the recent financial crisis: unemployment, high prices, and economic stagnation.

13. Putting the best face on the reason why his government exists ("the elections of March 22 showed the vitality of our democracy"), he then admitted that the voters had spoken on March 22, that they were not happy with the government's handling of the economy, and that the government needed to respond to voters' worries. After referring to "ethical principles and good governance," he said that the two critical sectors of the population to address were farmers and unemployed youth. This meant creating jobs for unemployed youth over the next three years, providing more credit for farmers, and improving fishing infrastructure. Work on the new Blaise Diagne airport would begin in 2010. Roads would improve. The MCC compact that would be signed this year would create 20,000 hectares of irrigated land. He pledged greater cooperation with other Islamic countries. Air Senegal would be reinvented as Air Senegal Teranga. There would be fewer power brownouts and blackouts, a very common problem in cities, and this would happen with energy efficiency. Unemployment would decline with rising tourism, new hotels, and group tours. General public health would rise in the crowded, unhealthy flood-prone cites and especially the Dakar suburbs. Penalties would become harsher against sex offenders (this in a country with severe problems with rape and pedophilia). 85% of the population would be inoculated against disease. 90% of children would be in school. By 2015 60% of high school students would be on the science and technology track. There will greater emphasis on science and technology and telecommunications at the University of Dakar and Gaston Berger University, the two most important

universities in the country. He pledged that the judicial branch would be independent of the executive and legislative branches, that courts will reduce time in considering cases and would be transparent.

¶4. However, he stated that although the press should be characterized by "pluralism," it should also balance liberty and responsibility, a common formula here for a press that should restrain its criticism of the President and his policies.

COMMENT: THREE AUDIENCES

¶5. Karim Wade, President Wade's son and apparently desired heir to the Presidency, sat behind the PM, and reviewed the speech and then handed it back to the PM in plain view of all before he delivered it. Ndiaye delivered a speech that in effect begins the 2012 presidential campaign. At the same time he attempted to appease the very broad diplomatic representation in the audience which is anxious to hear about institutional reform. There was much talk of modernizing roads, education and agriculture, and transparency and good governance. But the undercurrent was clear: reestablishing the political base lost in the March 22 elections and controlling the public political debate by warning the press, very critical of President Wade, about the limits to criticism.

SMITH